



## ICAB ELECTRONIC AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Electronic and social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. It is important that those who choose to engage in social media understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics. Our ability to serve children depends entirely on the trust and support of our community, and it is critical that we handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly. *(This introduction is adapted from the National CASA Association.)*

**When you engage in social media and online communication, you become a public figure. As a public figure that is associated with CASA, you have a responsibility to help protect this organization and our clients.** The following expectations are intended to give you guidance in both promoting and protecting CASA, and to protect the children we serve.

### **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of any electronic or social media site created/used by ICAB staff is to provide news, in-service training opportunities and other CASA Program-related materials to CASA volunteers serving in Iowa. It is also intended to provide program staff and volunteers a site through which program-related current events and training topics can be discussed. It shall not be used as a site to post or exchange information about actual cases that could be used to identify a specific child or other specific parties in a case involving child abuse and neglect or any other information which program staff and volunteers are required to keep confidential by law or policy.

Comments submitted to sites will be reviewed and, at the sole discretion of program staff, a representative sample may be posted on the site or comments may not be posted. In addition to the prohibited information enumerated above, the following forms of information shall not be posted:

- a. Comments not topically related to the particular content being commented upon;
- b. Profane language or content;
- c. Use of harassing language or tone;
- d. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
- e. Obscene sexual content or links to obscene sexual content;
- f. Solicitations of commerce;
- g. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- h. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- i. Information or content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party; or,
- j. Information that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to a political office.

### **User Expectations:**

#### **1. Staff**

- a. Are permitted to develop and use social media tools as a recruitment and information tool as time allows. This is not a required part of job duties.
- b. Post information about events such as swearing-in local volunteers, interesting articles/videos inspirational quotes and other events at the local or state level.
- c. Have volunteers sign a statement prior to swearing in that gives permission to use their photo for online purposes.
- d. Staff shall notify judges that photographs taken of them may be used in print or electronic media.

#### **2. Advocates**

- a. Can use social media to promote the CASA program and talk in generalities about their volunteer experiences. Advocates must follow the local, state and National CASA program policies on social media.
- b. Cannot at anytime disclose names, circumstances, events or pictures of anyone they are working with, including children, families, caregivers, foster parents, DHS Workers, providers, etc.
- c. Are not allowed to friend or follow anyone who would fall under the confidentiality policy such as children, family, foster parents and caregivers.
- d. Cannot use social media to express their opinions about the child welfare process, a ruling, an action taken by a professional or someone on their case.
- e. Advocates must use discretion when viewing information from social media about individuals related to a CASA case that may impact decision-making. CASAs will consult with the program Coordinator regarding how best to handle the information.

### **Information Subject to Public Disclosure**

The information submitted to this site is subject to the access and confidentiality provisions of Chapter 22 and any other applicable sections of the Code of Iowa. Any content posted may be subject to public disclosure including Open Records requests.

### **Authorized Users and Password Protections**

Only program staff and sworn ICAB volunteers will be approved to access sites. Persons with approved access shall not allow others to access the site using their login and password information. Passwords shall be different than other agency or program network passwords and be:

- a. At least eight characters,
- b. A mixture of numbers, upper and lower case letters,
- c. Include at least one special character, and
- d. Changed at least every sixty days.

In addition, ICAB staff and volunteers will adhere to the *National CASA Association Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers and Social Media Posting Policy* found below.

## National CASA Association Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers



The National CASA Association believes that social media tools, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. We believe that a thoughtful approach to online conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of the CASA and GAL movement and help recruit needed supporters and volunteers.

While National CASA encourages CASA and GAL staff, board members and volunteers to join the global online conversation, we also believe it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics—whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children as a national cause depends on the trust and support of the American public, and it is critical that we tell our story well—and handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

The following 10 guidelines will help you engage in online conversations about your involvement with the CASA cause in a way that is appropriate, yet still interesting. This policy document is built largely on the work of the American Red Cross, IBM, CBS Interactive and CASA of Franklin County, OH. We thank these organizations for disclosing their policies publicly so that all of us can learn from them.

### ***10 Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines***

1. **Be transparent.** Identify yourself and your role at the CASA program (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss CASA-related matters. Write in the first person. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of National CASA or your state or local CASA program (unless, of course, you are posting as part of your employment responsibilities for a program—as a communications or online outreach manager, for example).
2. **Always comply with the law in regard to copyright/plagiarism.** Never post someone else's work without their express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).
3. **Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character.** Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the CASA cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor and your family reading everything you post.
4. **Be respectful.** Don't pick fights. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes. You should show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.
5. **Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers and CASA staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash or embarrass your state or local CASA program, families, board members, donors or your

colleagues. If you have suggestions for improvements, please state them constructively or, better yet, go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions.

6. **Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses.
7. **Be committed.** If you decide to jump into online communication, do so with a commitment to post regularly and well. Link to others and show your unique contributions. Make it interesting and have fun!
8. **Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help you, your coworkers, volunteers and supporters better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?
9. **Respect work commitments.** Please remember that blogging and other social networking activities—unless specifically assigned as part of your employment—are personal and should be done on your own time. The obvious exception is if you have specifically been assigned to perform an online activity related to your responsibilities as a CASA employee or volunteer.
10. **Don't reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, National CASA Quality Assurance standards require:
  - Respect for the children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information
  - Adherence to the confidentiality restrictions imposed by law and CASA policies and procedures

**It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of cases.** It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as "youth" instead of "13-year-old girl." You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

Volunteers and staff should not link to personal pages (or become online "friends") of families or children they may encounter in their capacity with the CASA/GAL program. This includes email addresses, instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and YouTube. In addition, many programs prohibit volunteers from giving their email address or cell phone number to the child(ren) or family members on any case to which they are assigned.

Online communications and social media tools enable individuals to share insights and information—and express opinions—within the context of a globally distributed conversation. They support the democratization of knowledge and information and transform all of us from simply content consumers to content producers. If we follow the above guidelines, this exciting, evolving technology can be harnessed to help us all make a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children.

## National CASA Association Social Media Posting Policy



Thank you to all of our Facebook page visitors—especially those of you who use [CASAforChildren.org](http://CASAforChildren.org) and this Facebook page as a way to deepen your connection to other people engaged in the important work of finding safe, permanent homes for abused and neglected children. We have committed to expanding our communication with members of the CASA community by posting news and responding as quickly as we can to questions raised here.

We truly appreciate your comments and insights. We are a community that values mutual respect and civility. Disagreements, debates, and discussions are to be expected—that's often how we learn from each other. It's important that we engage in these conversations in a way that is respectful and positive.

Please treat each other with respect. Name-calling and offensive or foul language just isn't acceptable. We want a free and open discussion, but we will delete posts that are overly disruptive to the community.

Also, never post your personal contact information here. If you need to reach us, call our main number at 1-800-628-3233 or use the online forms at [CASAforChildren.org](http://CASAforChildren.org). Sharing contact information is neither safe nor wise. We're committed to taking every step to protect everyone's privacy. Help us with that.

Finally, advertising or solicitation is not the purpose of our page. Posts including advertising or promoting a specific Web site, event, or organization may be deleted.

Online tools can help us expand the CASA movement. We encourage all of our supporters to be involved. Let's treat each other with dignity and respect and build a strong and effective online community to make a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children.